

From: bbruckner@sioux-city.org
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2006 3:02 PM
To: NOP Livestock
Subject: Organic rules

I have been intently listening and reading of the latest attempt to revise standards for pasture/grass fed labeling standards for organic dairy and beef production. I am a small farmer in Northeast Nebraska. I am a lifelong resident of this area and am very interested in this topic.

I do not farm organically but I am very supportive of those who choose to operate organically. My family does consume organically produced food whenever possible and in particular our milk, which comes from Organic Valley.

I am concerned that without a minimum standard for the time period an animal must spend physically residing in open pasture, that we will allow further expansion of the industrial model of some organic dairies.

(eg.- Horizon Dairy)

If the standards state that an animal can be fed mechanically harvested forage for the duration of its lifetime, yet never set foot in a pasture or open field, the integrity of organic production will erode.

A true organic farmer is one who believes deeply in the health and welfare of the animal and the environment. There is no more beautiful sight than to see a herd of cattle wading through fresh grass with their heads to the ground doing the harvesting themselves. This is the way it is meant to be, not a situation where the feed is trucked for miles and fed to cattle contained in pens or resigned to life in a large contained building.

It angers me as to what great lengths powerful special interests will go to in order to mold policy in their favor. These special interests want to tap into a market that could enhance their bottom line. They don't care how they make the profit, they just want to do whatever is necessary to ease the process.

The industrialization of agriculture is extracting resources from the environment with no repercussion to those who commit the offense. Large feedlots and dairies have massive amounts of animal waste to dispose of on a limited amount of land. Our water and air is polluted but yet we seem content on treating the symptoms rather than making some tough decisions to address the real problem.

I demand a minimum standard for the amount of time a dairy or beef animal must spend in open pasture, roaming freely and harvesting the forage on their own. In case of a drought the farmer may still supplement, but it should be no greater than 25% of the total grazing period. In the winter months when grazing is impractical it only makes common sense that the animal would then have to be fed mechanically harvested and stockpiled forage and roughage to maintain the health of the animal.

Revision of the rules in the manner I have suggested would have the greatest benefit to small to medium sized family farmers who live on the land in conjunction with their animals. These family farmers support local businesses, put children in local schools, attend church at a local church along with a host of other things that create a community.

These are the things that construct the foundation of our country.

These things all have a value as well and for me that value is priceless.

Thank you for considering my comments and I would appreciate your support for my proposal.

Sincerely,

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